

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-133 (canceled)

134. (New) A method comprising:
transmitting a plurality of video programs to a plurality of consumer locations;
transmitting classification information in a header of at least some of the plurality of video programs transmitted;
providing a mechanism to compare the classification information to preference information of a consumer location; and
providing a mechanism to automatically select video programs from the plurality of video programs having a defined degree of similarity between the classification information and the preference information.

135. (New) The method of claim 134 further comprising:
billing a consumer location within the plurality of consumer locations once a video program has been selected for viewing that has been previously automatically selected for recording based upon preference information and then recorded at the consumer location.

136. (New) The method of claim 134, further comprising providing a mechanism to automatically overwrite stored digital data content with the automatically selected video programs according to a defined criteria.

137. (New) The method of claim 134, wherein the defined criteria is that oldest stored video programs are overwritten with the automatically selected video programs.

138. (New) The method of claim 134, wherein the defined criteria is that older releases of stored video programs are overwritten with the automatically selected video programs.

139. (New) The method of claim 134, wherein the defined criteria is that stored digital data content which least fits a preference of the consumer location is overwritten with the automatically selected video programs.

140. (New) The method of claim 134 wherein the pre-recorded video program is recorded on a removable and portable storage medium.

141. (New) The method of claim 134, further comprising:
encoding the transmitted video programs with data permitting playback only on a playback device with compatible decoder.

142. (New) The method of claim 141 further comprising:
encoding the transmitted video programs with time-based code keys A.

143. (New) The method of claim 142 wherein the time-based code keys A encoded into the transmitted video programs are correlated with periodic time-based key codes B that are blanket transmitted to the plurality of consumer locations and time-based codes C that are provided to consumer locations within the plurality of consumer locations that are in good standing, wherein a customer can only view a video program if all three codes keys A, B and C have been received.

144. (New) The method of claim 145 further comprising:
communicating video program playback information from each consumer location to a central controller system when the time-based codes C are provided.

145. (New) The method of claim 134 wherein the act of transmitting a plurality of video programs is carried out by direct broadcast satellite transmission on multiple channels in compressed-time format.

146. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 134.

147. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 135.

148. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 136.

149. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 137.

150. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 138.

151. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 139.

152. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 140.

153. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 141.

154. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 142.

155. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 143.

156. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 144.

157. (New) A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon for performing the method of claim 145.

158. (New) A device comprising:

a receiving mechanism configured to receive a plurality of video programs transmitted together wherein there is classification information in a header of at least some of the plurality of video programs transmitted;

a comparing mechanism configured to compare the classification information to preference information of a consumer location;

a selection mechanism configured to automatically select video programs from the plurality of transmitted video programs having a defined degree of similarity between the classification information and the preference information; and

a recording mechanism configured to record the automatically selected video programs based on the preference information.

159. (New) The device of claim 158 wherein the recording mechanism is configured to record the automatically selected video programs on a removable and portable storage medium.

160. (New) The device of claim 158 further comprising:

a playback mechanism configured to playback automatically selected video programs upon selection for playback by a user; and

a billing mechanism in communication with the playback mechanism configured to transmit billing information to a central billing system accounting for each time the automatically selected video program has been selected for playback.

161. (New) The device of claim 158 further comprising:

a control mechanism in communication with the receiving mechanism configured to verify a received combination of time-based code keys for authorizing play-back of said transmitted video programs at a desired time, and enabling said playback.

162. (New) The device of claim 161 further comprising:
a decoding mechanism in communication with the control mechanism configured to decode transmitted video programs wherein time-based code keys A that are encoded into the transmitted video programs are correlated with periodic time-based key codes B that are blanket transmitted to a plurality of consumer locations and time-based codes C that are provided to consumer locations within the plurality of consumer locations that are in good standing such that a consumer can only view a video program if all three codes keys A, B and C have been received by the playback device.

163. (New) The device of claim 162 wherein the billing mechanism comprises:
a mechanism configured to communicate an identity of said previously selected video program and a unique identifying address associated with said consumer to said central billing system upon initiating play-back of the previously selected video program; and
a playback-enabling mechanism configured to receive from said central billing system the third time-based code key for identifying a status of said consumer to enable said play-back of said previously selected video program.

164. (New) The device of claim 158, further comprising providing a mechanism to automatically overwrite stored digital data content with the automatically selected video programs according to a defined criteria.

165. (New) The device of claim 164, wherein the defined criteria is that oldest stored video programs are overwritten with the automatically selected video programs.

166. (New) The device of claim 164, wherein the defined criteria is that older releases of stored video programs are overwritten with the automatically selected video programs.

167. (New) The device of claim 164, wherein the defined criteria is that stored digital data content which least fits a preference of the consumer location is overwritten with the automatically selected video programs.

168. (New) A method comprising:
receiving a plurality of video programs at a consumer location;
receiving classification information in a header of at least some of the plurality of video programs received;
comparing the classification information to preference information of the consumer location; and
automatically selecting video programs from the plurality of video programs having a defined degree of similarity between the classification information and the preference information.

169. (New) The method of claim 168 further comprising:
receiving a bill once a video program has been selected for viewing that has been previously automatically selected for recording based upon preference information and then recorded at the consumer location.

170. (New) The method of claim 168, further comprising automatically overwriting stored digital data content with the automatically selected video programs according to a defined criteria.

171. (New) The method of claim 168, wherein the defined criteria is that oldest stored video programs are overwritten with the automatically selected video programs.

172. (New) The method of claim 168, wherein the defined criteria is that older releases of stored video programs are overwritten with the automatically selected video programs.

173. (New) The method of claim 168, wherein the defined criteria is that stored digital data content which least fits a preference of the consumer location is overwritten with the automatically selected video programs.

174. (New) The method of claim 168 wherein the pre-recorded video program is recorded on a removable and portable storage medium.

175. (New) A system comprising:

a mechanism configured to transmit a plurality of video programs to a plurality of consumer locations;

a mechanism configured to transmit classification information in a header of at least some of the plurality of video programs transmitted;

a mechanism configured to compare the classification information to preference information of a consumer location; and

a mechanism configured to automatically select video programs from the plurality of video programs having a defined degree of similarity between the classification information and the preference information.

176. (New) The system of claim 175 further comprising:

a billing mechanism configured to bill a consumer location within the plurality of consumer locations once a video program has been selected for viewing that has been previously automatically selected for recording based upon preference information and then recorded at the consumer location.

177. (New) The system of claim 175, further comprising a mechanism to automatically overwrite stored digital data content with the automatically selected video programs according to a defined criteria.